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SAPPHO  
ONE HUNDRED LYRICS



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*From a Greek Gem in the British Museum*

SAPPHO  
ONE HUNDRED LYRICS  
BY  
BLISS CARMAN



LONDON  
CHATTO & WINDUS  
1921



"SAPPHO WHO BROKE OFF A FRAGMENT OF HER SOUL  
FOR US TO GUESS AT."

"SAPPHO, WITH THAT GLORIOLE  
OF EBON HAIR ON CALMED BROWS—  
O POET-WOMAN! NONE FORGOES  
THE LEAP, ATTAINING THE REPOSE."

E. B. BROWNING.

273603



## INTRODUCTION

**The Poetry of Sappho.**—If all the poets and all the lovers of poetry should be asked to name the most precious of the priceless things which time has wrung in tribute from the triumphs of human genius, the answer which would rush to every tongue would be “The Lost Poems of Sappho.” These we know to have been jewels of a radiance so imperishable that the broken gleams of them still dazzle men’s eyes, whether shining from the two small brilliants and the handful of star-dust which alone remain to us, or reflected merely from the adoration of those poets of old time who were so fortunate as to witness their full glory.

For about two thousand five hundred years Sappho has held her place as not only the supreme poet of her sex, but the chief lyrist of all lyrists. Every one who reads acknowledges her fame, concedes her

## INTRODUCTION

supremacy; but to all except poets and Hellenists her name is a vague and uncomprehended splendour, rising secure above a persistent mist of misconception. In spite of all that is in these days being written about Sappho, it is perhaps not out of place now to inquire, in a few words, into the substance of this supremacy which towers so unassailably secure from what appear to be such shadowy foundations.

First, we have the witness of her contemporaries. Sappho was at the height of her career about six centuries before Christ, at a period when lyric poetry was peculiarly esteemed and cultivated at the centres of Greek life. Among the Æolic peoples of the Isles, in particular, it had been carried to a high pitch of perfection, and its forms had become the subject of assiduous study. Its technique was exact, complex, extremely elaborate, minutely regulated; yet the essential fires of sincerity, spontaneity, imagination and passion were flaming with undiminished heat behind the fixed forms and restricted measures. The very metropolis of this lyric realm was Mitylene of Lesbos, where, amid the myrtle groves and temples, the sunlit silver of the fountains, the hyacinth gardens by a soft blue sea, Beauty and Love in their young warmth

could fuse the most rigid forms to fluency. Here Sappho was the acknowledged queen of song—revered, studied, imitated, served, adored by a little court of attendants and disciples, loved and hymned by Alcæus, and acclaimed by her fellowcraftsmen throughout Greece as the wonder of her age. That all the tributes of her contemporaries show reverence not less for her personality than for her genius is sufficient answer to the calumnies with which the ribald jesters of that later period, the corrupt and shameless writers of Athenian comedy, strove to defile her fame. It is sufficient, also, to warrant our regarding the picturesque but scarcely dignified story of her vain pursuit of Phaon and her frenzied leap from the Cliff of Leucas as nothing more than a poetic myth, reminiscent, perhaps, of the myth of Aphrodite and Adonis—who is, indeed, called Phaon in some versions. The story is further discredited by the fact that we find no mention of it in Greek literature—even among those Attic comedians who would have clutched at it so eagerly and given it so gross a turn—till a date more than two hundred years after Sappho's death. It is a myth which has begotten some exquisite literature, both in prose and verse, from Ovid's famous epistle to Addison's gracious

fantasy and some impassioned and imperishable dithyrambs of Mr. Swinburne; but one need not accept the story as a fact in order to appreciate the beauties which flowered out from its coloured unreality.

The applause of contemporaries, however, is not always justified by the verdict of after-times, and does not always secure an immortality of renown. The fame of Sappho has a more stable basis. Her work was in the world's possession for not far short of a thousand years—a thousand years of changing tastes, searching criticism, and familiar use. It had to endure the wear and tear of quotation, the commonizing touch of the school and the market-place. And under this test its glory grew ever more and more conspicuous. Through those thousand years poets and critics vied with one another in proclaiming her verse the one unmatched exemplar of lyric art. Such testimony, even though not a single fragment remained to us from which to judge her poetry for ourselves, might well convince us that the supremacy acknowledged by those who knew all the triumphs of the genius of old Greece was beyond the assault of any modern rival. We might safely accept the sustained judgment of a thousand years of Greece.

Fortunately for us, however, two small but incomparable odes and a few scintillating fragments have survived, quoted and handed down in the eulogies of critics and expositors. In these the wisest minds, the greatest poets, and the most inspired teachers of modern days have found justification for the unanimous verdict of antiquity. The tributes of Addison, Tennyson, and others, the throbbing paraphrases and ecstatic interpretations of Swinburne, are too well known to call for special comment in this brief note ; but the concise summing up of her genius by Mr. Watts-Dunton in his remarkable essay on poetry is so convincing and illuminating that it seems to demand quotation here : "Never before these songs were sung, and never since did the human soul, in the grip of a fiery passion, utter a cry like hers ; and, from the executive point of view, in directness, in lucidity, in that high, imperious verbal economy which only nature can teach the artist, she has no equal, and none worthy to take the place of second."

The poems of Sappho so mysteriously lost to us seem to have consisted of at least nine books of odes, together with *epithalamia*, epigrams, elegies, and monodies. Of the several theories which have

been advanced to account for their disappearance, the most plausible seems to be that which represents them as having been burned at Byzantium in the year 380 Anno Domini, by command of Gregory Nazianzen, in order that his own poems might be studied in their stead and the morals of the people thereby improved. Of the efficacy of this act no means of judging has come down to us.

In recent years there has arisen a great body of literature upon the subject of Sappho, most of it the abstruse work of scholars writing for scholars. But the gist of it all, together with the minutest surviving fragment of her verse, has been made available to the general reader in English by Mr. Henry T. Wharton, in whose altogether admirable little volume we find all that is known and the most apposite of all that has been said up to the present day about

“Love’s priestess, mad with pain and joy of song,  
Song’s priestess, mad with joy and pain of love.”

Perhaps the most perilous and the most alluring venture in the whole field of poetry is that which Mr. Carman has undertaken in attempting to give us in English verse those lost poems of Sappho of

which fragments have survived. The task is obviously not one of translation or of paraphrasing, but of imaginative and, at the same time, interpretive construction. It is as if a sculptor of to-day were to set himself, with reverence, and trained craftsmanship, and studious familiarity with the spirit, technique, and atmosphere of his subject, to restore some statues of Polyclitus or Praxiteles of which he had but a broken arm, a foot, a knee, a finger upon which to build. Mr. Carman's method, apparently, has been to imagine each lost lyric as discovered, and then to translate it; for the indefinable flavour of the translation is maintained throughout, though accompanied by the fluidity and freedom of purely original work.

C. G. D. ROBERTS.



Now to please my little friend  
I must make these notes of spring,  
With the soft south-west wind in them  
And the marsh notes of the frogs.

I must take a gold-bound pipe,  
And outmatch the bubbling call  
From the beechwoods in the sunlight,  
From the meadows in the rain.



## CONTENTS

		PAGE
	Now to please my little friend . . . . .	xvii
I	Cyprus, Paphos, or Panormus . . . . .	3
II	What shall we do, Cytherea? . . . . .	4
III	Power and beauty and knowledge . . . . .	5
IV	O Pan of the evergreen forest . . . . .	6
V	O Aphrodite . . . . .	8
VI	Peer of the gods he seems . . . . .	10
VII	The Cyprian came to thy cradle . . . . .	12
VIII	Aphrodite of the foam . . . . .	14
IX	Nay, but always and forever . . . . .	15
X	Let there be garlands, Dica . . . . .	16
XI	When the Cretan maidens . . . . .	17
XII	In a dream I spoke with the Cyprus-born . . . . .	18
XIII	Sleep thou in the bosom . . . . .	19
XIV	Hesperus, bringing together . . . . .	20
XV	In the grey olive-grove a small brown bird . . . . .	21

## CONTENTS

XVI	In the apple-boughs the coolness . . . . .	22
XVII	Pale rose-leaves have fallen . . . . .	23
XVIII	The courtyard of her house is wide . . . . .	24
XIX	There is a medlar-tree . . . . .	25
XX	I behold Arcturus going westward . . . . .	26
XXI	Softly the first step of twilight . . . . .	27
XXII	Once you lay upon my bosom . . . . .	28
XXIII	I loved thee, Atthis, in the long ago . . . . .	29
XXIV	I shall be ever maiden . . . . .	30
XXV	It was summer when I found you . . . . .	31
XXVI	I recall thy white gown, cinctured . . . . .	32
XXVII	Lover, art thou of a surety . . . . .	33
XXVIII	With your head thrown backward . . . . .	34
XXIX	Ah, what am I but a torrent . . . . .	35
XXX	Love shakes my soul, like a mountain wind . . . . .	36
XXXI	Love, let the wind cry . . . . .	37
XXXII	Heart of mine, if all the altars . . . . .	40
XXXIII	Never yet, love, in earth's lifetime . . . . .	42
XXXIV	"Who was Atthis?" men shall ask . . . . .	43
XXXV	When the great pink mallow . . . . .	44
XXXVI	When I pass thy door at night . . . . .	46
XXXVII	Well I found you in the twilit garden . . . . .	47
XXXVIII	Will not men remember us . . . . .	48

## CONTENTS

xxi

XXXIX	I grow weary of the foreign cities . . . . .	49
XL	Ah, what detains thee, Phaon . . . . .	50
XLI	Phaon, O my lover . . . . .	51
XLII	O heart of insatiable longing . . . . .	53
XLIII	Surely somehow, in some measure . . . . .	54
XLIV	O but my delicate lover . . . . .	55
XLV	Softer than the hill-fog to the forest . . . . .	56
XLVI	I seek and desire . . . . .	57
XLVII	Like torn sea-kelp in the drift . . . . .	58
XLVIII	Fine woven purple linen . . . . .	59
XLIX	When I am home from travel . . . . .	60
L	When I behold the pharos shine . . . . .	61
LI	Is the day long . . . . .	62
LII	Lo, on the distance a dark blue ravine . . . . .	64
LIII	Art thou the topmost apple . . . . .	66
LIV	How soon will all my lovely days be over . . . . .	67
LV	Soul of sorrow, why this weeping? . . . . .	68
LVI	It never can be mine . . . . .	69
LVII	Others shall behold the sun . . . . .	70
LVIII	Let thy strong spirit never fear . . . . .	71
LIX	Will none say of Sappho . . . . .	72
LX	When I have departed . . . . .	73

LXI	There is no more to say, now thou art still . . . . .	74
LXII	Play up, play up thy silver flute . . . . .	75
LXIII	A beautiful child is mine . . . . .	76
LXIV	Ah, but now henceforth . . . . .	77
LXV	Softly the wind moves through the radiant morning . . . . .	78
LXVI	What the west wind whispers . . . . .	79
LXVII	Indoors the fire is kindled . . . . .	81
LXVIII	You ask how love can keep the mortal soul . . . . .	82
LXIX	Like a tall forest were their spears . . . . .	83
LXX	My lover smiled, "O friend, ask not . . . . .	84
LXXI	Ye who have the stable world . . . . .	85
LXXII	I heard the gods reply . . . . .	86
LXXIII	The sun on the tide, the peach on the bough . . . . .	87
LXXIV	If death be good . . . . .	88
LXXV	Tell me what this life means . . . . .	89
LXXVI	Ye have heard how Marsyas . . . . .	90
LXXVII	Hour by hour I sit . . . . .	91
LXXVIII	Once in the shining street . . . . .	92
LXXIX	How strange is love, O my lover . . . . .	93

## CONTENTS

xxiii

LXXX	How to say I love you . . . . .	94
LXXXI	Hark, love, to the tambourines . . . . .	95
LXXXII	Over the roofs the honey-coloured moon . . . . .	96
LXXXIII	In the quiet garden world . . . . .	97
LXXXIV	Soft was the wind in the beech-trees . . . . .	98
LXXXV	Have ye heard the news of Sappho's garden . . . . .	99
LXXXVI	Love is so strong a thing . . . . .	101
LXXXVII	Hadst thou with all thy loveliness been true . . . . .	102
LXXXVIII	As on a morn a traveller might emerge . . . . .	103
LXXXIX	Where shall I look for thee . . . . .	104
xc	O sad, sad face and saddest eyes that ever . . . . .	106
xci	Why have the gods in derision . . . . .	108
xcii	Like a red lily in the meadow grasses . . . . .	110
xciii	When in the spring the swallows all return . . . . .	111
xciv	Cold is the wind where Daphne sleeps . . . . .	112
xcv	Hark, where Poseidon's . . . . .	113
xcvi	Hark, my lover, it is spring! . . . . .	115

xcvii	When the early soft spring-wind comes blowing . . . . .	118
xcviii	I am more tremulous than shaken reeds.	120
xcix	Over the wheat field . . . . .	121
c	Once more the rain on the mountain .	123
	Epilogue . . . . .	127

# SAPPHO



I

CYPRUS, Paphos, or Panormus  
May detain thee with their splendour  
Of oblations on thine altars,  
O imperial Aphrodite.

Yet do thou regard, with pity  
For a nameless child of passion,  
This small unfrequented valley  
By the sea, O sea-born mother.

II

**W**HAT shall we do, Cytherea ?  
Lovely Adonis is dying.  
Ah, but we mourn him !

Will he return when the Autumn  
Purples the earth, and the sunlight  
Sleeps in the vineyard ?

Will he return when the Winter  
Huddles the sheep, and Orion  
Goes to his hunting ?

Ah, but thy beauty, Adonis,  
With the soft spring and the south wind,  
Love and desire !

### III

POWER and beauty and knowledge,—  
Pan, Aphrodite, or Hermes,—  
Whom shall we life-loving mortals  
    Serve and be happy?

Lo now, your garlanded altars,  
Are they not goodly with flowers?  
Have ye not honour and pleasure  
    In lovely Lesbos?

Will ye not, therefore, a little  
Hearten, impel, and inspire  
One who adores, with a favour  
    Threefold in wonder?

IV

O Pan of the evergreen forest,  
Protector of herds in the meadows,  
Helper of men at their toiling,—  
Tillage and harvest and herding,—  
How many times to frail mortals  
Hast thou not hearkened!

Now even I come before thee  
With oil and honey and wheat-bread,  
Praying for strength and fulfilment  
Of human longing, with purpose  
Ever to keep thy great worship  
Pure and undarkened.

---

O Hermes, master of knowledge,  
Measure and number and rhythm,  
Worker of wonders in metal,  
Moulder of malleable music,  
So often the giver of secret  
Learning to mortals!

Now even I, a fond woman,  
Frail and of small understanding,  
Yet with unslakable yearning  
Greatly desiring wisdom,  
Come to the threshold of reason  
And the bright portals.

---

And thou, sea-born Aphrodite,  
In whose beneficent keeping  
Earth, with her infinite beauty,  
Colour and fashion and fragrance,  
Glows like a flower with fervour  
Where woods are vernal !

Touch with thy lips and enkindle  
This moon-white delicate body,  
Drench with the dew of enchantment  
This mortal one, that I also  
Grow to the measure of beauty  
Fleet yet eternal.

O Aphrodite,  
God-born and deathless,  
Break not my spirit  
With bitter anguish :  
Thou wilful empress,  
I pray thee, hither !

As once aforetime  
Well thou didst hearken  
To my voice far off,—  
Listen, and leaving  
Thy father's golden  
House in yoked chariot,

Come, thy fleet sparrows  
Beating the mid-air  
Over the dark earth.  
Suddenly near me,  
Smiling, immortal,  
Thy bright regard asked

What had befallen,—  
Why I had called thee,—  
What my mad heart then  
Most was desiring.  
“What fair thing wouldest thou  
Lure now to love thee?

“Who wrongs thee, Sappho?  
If now she flies thee,  
Soon shall she follow;—  
Scorning thy gifts now,  
Soon be the giver;—  
And a loth loved one

“Soon be the lover.”  
So even now, too,  
Come and release me  
From mordant love pain,  
And all my heart’s will  
Help me accomplish!

VI

PEER of the gods he seems,  
Who in thy presence  
Sits and hears close to him  
Thy silver speech-tones  
And lovely laughter.

Ah, but the heart flutters  
Under my bosom,  
When I behold thee  
Even a moment ;  
Utterance leaves me ;

My tongue is useless ;  
A subtle fire  
Runs through my body ;  
My eyes are sightless,  
And my ears ringing ;

I flush with fever,  
And a strong trembling  
Lays hold upon me;  
Paler than grass am I,  
Half dead for madness.

Yet must I, greatly  
Daring, adore thee,  
As the adventurous  
Sailor makes seaward  
For the lost sky-line

And undiscovered  
Fabulous islands,  
Drawn by the lure of  
Beauty and summer  
And the sea's secret.

## VII

**T**HE Cyprian came to thy cradle,  
When thou wast little and small,  
And said to the nurse who rocked thee  
“Fear not thou for the child:

“She shall be kindly favoured,  
And fair and fashioned well,  
As befits the Lesbian maidens  
And those who are fated to love.”

Hermes came to thy cradle,  
Resourceful, sagacious, serene,  
And said, “The girl must have knowledge,  
To lend her freedom and poise.

Naught will avail her beauty,  
If she have not wit beside.  
She shall be Hermes' daughter,  
Passing wise in her day."

Great Pan came to thy cradle,  
With calm of the deepest hills,  
And smiled, "They have forgotten  
The veriest power of life.

"To kindle her shapely beauty,  
And illumine her mind withal,  
I give to the little person  
The glowing and craving soul."

VIII

A PHRODITE of the foam,  
Who hast given all good gifts,  
And made Sappho at thy will  
Love so greatly and so much,

Ah, how comes it my frail heart  
Is so fond of all things fair,  
I can never choose between  
Gorgo and Andromeda?

## IX

**N**AY, but always and forever  
Like the bending yellow grain,  
Or quick water in a channel,  
Is the heart of man.

Comes the unseen breath in power  
Like a great wind from the sea,  
And we bow before his coming,  
Though we know not why.

X

LET there be garlands, Dica,  
Around thy lovely hair,  
And supple sprays of blossom  
Twined by thy soft hands.

Whoso is crowned with flowers  
Has favour with the gods,  
Who have no kindly eyes  
For the ungarlanded.

XI

WHEN the Cretan maidens  
Dancing up the full moon  
Round some fair new altar,  
Trample the soft blossoms of fine grass,

There is mirth among them.  
Aphrodite's children  
Ask her benediction  
On their bridals in the summer night.

## XII

**I**N a dream I spoke with the Cyprus-born,  
And said to her,

“Mother of beauty, mother of joy,  
Why hast thou given to men

“This thing called love, like the ache of a wound  
In beauty’s side,

To burn and throb and be quelled for an hour  
And never wholly depart?”

And the daughter of Cyprus said to me,

“Child of the earth,

Behold, all things are born and attain,  
But only as they desire,—

“The sun that is strong, the gods that are wise,

The loving heart,

Deeds and knowledge and beauty and joy,—  
But before all else was desire.”

### XIII

SLEEP thou in the bosom  
Of the tender comrade,  
While the living water  
Whispers in the well-run,  
And the oleanders  
Glimmer in the moonlight.

Soon, ah, soon the shy birds  
Will be at their fluting,  
And the morning planet  
Rise above the garden ;  
For there is a measure  
Set to all things mortal.

XIV

H ESPERUS, bringing together  
All that the morning star scattered,—

Sheep to be folded in twilight,  
Children for mothers to fondle,—

Me too will bring to the dearest,  
Tenderest breast in all Lesbos.

XV

**I**N the grey olive-grove a small brown bird  
Had built her nest and waited for the spring.  
But who could tell the happy thought that came  
To lodge beneath my scarlet tunic's fold ?

All day long now is the green earth renewed  
With the bright sea-wind and the yellow blossoms.  
From the cool shade I hear the silver splash  
Of the blown fountain at the garden's end.

## XVI

**I**N the apple boughs the coolness  
Murmurs, and the grey leaves flicker  
Where sleep wanders.

In this garden all the hot noon  
I await thy fluttering footfall  
Through the twilight.

XVII

P ALE rose leaves have fallen  
In the fountain water ;  
And soft reedy flute-notes  
Pierce the sultry quiet.

But I wait and listen,  
Till the trodden gravel  
Tells me, all impatience,  
It is Phaon's footstep.

## XVIII

THE courtyard of her house is wide  
And cool and still when day departs.  
Only the rustle of leaves is there  
And running water.

And then her mouth, more delicate  
Than the frail wood-anemone,  
Brushes my cheek, and deeper grow  
The purple shadows.

## XIX

**T**HERE is a medlar-tree  
Growing in front of my lover's house,  
And there all day  
The wind makes a pleasant sound.

And when the evening comes,  
We sit there together in the dusk,  
And watch the stars  
Appear in the quiet blue.

XX

**I** BEHOLD Arcturus going westward  
Down the crowded slope of night-dark azure,  
While the Scorpion with red Antares  
Trails along the sea-line to the southward.

From the ilex grove there comes soft laughter,—  
My companions at their glad love-making,—  
While that curly-headed boy from Naxos  
With his jade flute marks the purple quiet.

XXI

**S**OFTLY the first step of twilight  
Falls on the darkening dial,  
One by one kindle the lights  
In Mitylene.

Noises are hushed in the courtyard,  
The busy day is departing,  
Children are called from their games,—  
Herds from their grazing.

And from the deep-shadowed angles  
Comes the soft murmur of lovers,  
Then through the quiet of dusk  
Bright sudden laughter.

From the hushed street, through the portal,  
Where soon my lover will enter,  
Comes the pure strain of a flute  
Tender with passion.

XXII

O NCE you lay upon my bosom,  
While the long blue-silver moonlight  
Walked the plain, with that pure passion  
All your own.

Now the moon is gone, the Pleiads  
Gone, the dead of night is going ;  
Slips the hour, and on my bed  
I lie alone.

## XXIII

I LOVED thee, Atthis, in the long ago,  
When the great oleanders were in flower  
In the broad herded meadows full of sun.  
And we would often at the fall of dusk  
Wander together by the silver stream,  
When the soft grass-heads were all wet with dew  
And purple-misted in the fading light.  
And joy I knew and sorrow at thy voice,  
And the superb magnificence of love,—  
The loneliness that saddens solitude,  
And the sweet speech that makes it durable,—  
The bitter longing and the keen desire,  
The sweet companionship through quiet days  
In the slow ample beauty of the world,  
And the unutterable glad release  
Within the temple of the holy night.  
O Atthis, how I loved thee long ago  
In that fair perished summer by the sea !

XXIV

I SHALL be ever maiden,  
If thou be not my lover,  
And no man shall possess me  
Henceforth and forever.

But thou alone shalt gather  
This fragile flower of beauty,—  
To crush and keep the fragrance  
Like a holy incense.

Thou only shalt remember  
This love of mine, or hallow  
The coming years with gladness,  
Calm and pride and passion.

XXV

**I**T was summer when I found you  
In the meadow long ago,  
And the golden vetch was growing  
By the shore.

Did we falter when love took us  
With a gust of great desire?  
Does the barley bid the wind wait  
In his course?

XXVI

**I** recall thy white gown, cinctured  
With a linen belt, whereon  
Violets were wrought, and scented  
With strange perfumes out of Egypt.

And I know thy foot was covered  
With fair Lydian broidered straps;  
And the petals from a rose-tree  
Fell within the marble basin.

XXVII

**L**OVER, art thou of a surety  
Not a learner of the wood-god ?  
Has the madness of his music  
Never touched thee ?

Ah, thou dear and godlike mortal,  
If Pan takes thee for his pupil,  
Make me but another Syrinx  
For that piping.

## XXVIII

WITH your head thrown backward  
In my arm's safe hollow,  
And your face all rosy  
With the mounting fervour ;

While the grave eyes greateren  
With the wise new wonder,  
Swimming in a love-mist  
Like the haze of Autumn ;

From that throat, the throbbing  
Nightingale's for pleading,  
Wayward, soft, and welling  
Inarticulate love-notes,

Come the words that bubble  
Up through broken laughter,  
Sweeter than spring-water,  
“Gods, I am so happy ! ”

## XXIX

A H, what am I but a torrent,  
Headstrong, impetuous, broken,  
Like the spent clamour of waters  
In the blue canyon ?

Ah, what art thou but a fern-frond,  
Wet with blown spray from the river,  
Diffident, lovely, sequestered,  
Frail on the rock-ledge ?

Yet, are we not for one brief day,  
While the sun sleeps on the mountain,  
Wild-hearted lover and loved one,  
Safe in Pan's keeping ?

XXX

L OVE shakes my soul, like a mountain wind  
Falling upon the trees,  
When they are swayed and whitened and bowed  
As the great gusts will.

I know why Daphne sped through the grove  
When the bright god came by,  
And shut herself in the laurel's heart  
For her silent doom.

Love fills my heart, like my lover's breath  
Filling the hollow flute,  
Till the magic wood awakes and cries  
With remembrance and joy.

Ah, timid Syrinx, do I not know  
Thy tremor of sweet fear?  
For a beautiful and imperious player  
Is the lord of life.

XXXI

LOVE, let the wind cry  
On the dark mountain,  
Bending the ash-trees  
And the tall hemlocks,  
With the great voice of  
Thunderous legions,  
How I adore thee.

Let the hoarse torrent  
In the blue canyon,  
Murmuring mightily  
Out of the grey mist  
Of primal chaos,  
Cease not proclaiming  
How I adore thee.

Let the long rhythm  
Of crunching rollers,  
Breaking and bellowing  
On the white seaboard,  
Titan and tireless,  
Tell, while the world stands,  
How I adore thee.

Love, let the clear call  
Of the tree-cricket,  
Frailest of creatures,  
Green as the young grass,  
Mark with his trilling  
Resonant bell-note,  
How I adore thee.

Let the glad lark-song  
Over the meadow,  
That melting lyric  
Of molten silver,  
Be for a signal  
To listening mortals,  
How I adore thee.

But more than all sounds,  
Surer, serener,  
Fuller with passion  
And exultation,  
Let the hushed whisper  
In thine own heart say,  
How I adore thee.

XXXII

H EART of mine, if all the altars  
Of the ages stood before me,  
Not one pure enough nor sacred  
Could I find to lay this white, white  
Rose of love upon.

I who am not great enough to  
Love thee with this mortal body  
So impassionate with ardour,  
But oh, not too small to worship  
While the sun shall shine,—

I would build a fragrant temple  
To thee, in the dark green forest,  
Of red cedar and fine sandal,  
And there love thee with sweet service  
All my whole life long.

I would freshen it with flowers,  
And the piney hill-wind through it  
Should be sweetened with soft fervours  
Of small prayers in gentle language  
Thou wouldst smile to hear.

And a tinkling Eastern wind-bell,  
With its fluttering inscription,  
From the rafters with bronze music  
Should retard the quiet fleeting  
Of uncounted hours.

And my hero, while so human,  
Should be even as the gods are,  
In that shrine of utter gladness,  
With the tranquil stars above it  
And the sea below.

XXXIII

**N**EVER yet, love, in earth's lifetime,  
Hath any cunningest minstrel  
Told the one seventh of wisdom,  
Ravishment, ecstasy, transport,  
Hid in the hue of the hyacinth's  
Purple in springtime.

Not in the lyre of Orpheus,  
Not in the songs of Musæus,  
Lurked the unfathomed bewitchment  
Wrought by the wind in the grasses,  
Held by the rote of the sea-surf,  
In early summer.

Only to exquisite lovers,  
Fashioned for beauty's fulfilment,  
Mated as rhythm to reed-stop  
Whence the wild music is moulded,  
Ever appears the full measure  
Of the world's wonder.

XXXIV

“ **W**HO was Atthis ? ” men shall ask,  
When the world is old, and time  
Has accomplished without haste  
The strange destiny of men.

Haply in that far-off age  
One shall find these silver songs,  
With their human freight, and guess  
What a lover Sappho was.

XXXV

WHEN the great pink mallow  
Blossoms in the marshland,  
Full of lazy summer  
And soft hours,

Then I hear the summons  
Not a mortal lover  
Ever yet resisted,  
Strange and far.

In the faint blue foothills,  
Making magic music,  
Pan is at his love-work  
On the reeds.

I can guess the heart-stop,  
Fall and lull and sequence,  
Full of grief for Syrinx  
Long ago.

Then the crowding madness,  
Wild and keen and tender,  
Trembles with the burden  
Of great joy.

Nay, but well I follow,  
All unskilled, that fluting.  
Never yet was reed-nymph  
Like to thee.

XXXVI

WHEN I pass thy door at night  
I a benediction breathe:  
“Ye who have the sleeping world  
In your care,  
  
“Guard the linen sweet and cool,  
Where a lovely golden head  
With its dreams of mortal bliss  
Slumbers now!”

XXXVII

WELL I found you in the twilit garden,  
Laid a lover's hand upon your shoulder,  
And we both were made aware of loving  
Past the reach of reason to unravel,  
Or the much desiring heart to follow.

There we heard the breath among the grasses  
And the gurgle of soft-running water,  
Well contented with the spacious starlight,  
The cool wind's touch and the deep blue distance,  
Till the dawn came in with golden sandals.

XXXVIII

**W**ILL not men remember us  
In the days to come hereafter,—  
Thy warm-coloured loving beauty  
And my love or thee?

Thou, the hyacinth that grows  
By a quiet-running river;  
I, the watery reflection  
And the broken gleam.

### XXXIX

I GROW weary of the foreign cities,  
The sea travel and the stranger peoples.  
Even the clear voice of hardy fortune  
Dares me not as once on brave adventure.

For the heart of man must seek and wander,  
Ask and question and discover knowledge ;  
Yet above all goodly things is wisdom,  
And love greater than all understanding.

So, a mariner, I long for land-fall,—  
When a darker purple on the sea-rim,  
O'er the prow uplifted, shall be Lesbos  
And the gleaming towers of Mitylene.

XL

A H, what detains thee, Phaon,  
So long from Mitylene,  
Where now thy restless lover  
Wearies for thy coming ?

A fever burns me, Phaon ;  
My knees quake on the threshold,  
And all my strength is loosened,  
Slack with disappointment.

But thou wilt come, my Phaon,  
Back from the sea like morning,  
To quench in golden gladness  
The ache of parted lovers.

XLI

**P**HAON, O my lover,  
What should so detain thee,

Now the wind comes walking  
Through the leafy twilight?

All the plum-leaves quiver  
With the coolth and darkness,

After their long patience  
In consuming ardour.

And the moving grasses  
Have relief; the dew-drench

Comes to quell the parching  
Ache of noon they suffered.

I alone of all things  
Fret with unsluiced fire.

And there is no quenching  
In the night for Sappho,

Since her lover Phaon  
Leaves her unrequited.

XLII

O HEART of insatiable longing,  
What spell, what enchantment allures thee  
Over the rim of the world  
With the sails of the sea-going ships ?

And when the rose-petals are scattered  
At dead of still noon on the grass-plot,  
What means this passionate grief,—  
This infinite ache of regret ?

XLIII

SURELY somehow, in some measure,  
There will be joy and fulfilment,—  
Cease from this throb of desire,—  
Even for Sappho !

Surely some fortunate hour  
Phaon will come, and his beauty  
Be spent like water to plenish  
Need of that beauty !

Where is the breath of Poseidon,  
Cool from the sea-floor with evening ?  
Why are Selene's white horses  
So long arriving ?

XLIV

O BUT my delicate lover,  
Is she not fair as the moonlight ?  
Is she not supple and strong  
For hurried passion ?

Has not the god of the green world,  
In his large tolerant wisdom,  
Filled with the ardours of earth  
Her twenty summers ?

Well did he make her for loving ;  
Well did he mould her for beauty ;  
Gave her the wish that is brave  
With understanding.

“ O Pan, avert from this maiden  
Sorrow, misfortune, bereavement,  
Harm, and unhappy regret,”  
Prays one fond mortal.

XLV

**S**OFTER than the hill-fog to the forest  
Are the loving hands of my dear lover,  
When she sleeps beside me in the starlight  
And her beauty drenches me with rest.

As the quiet mist enfolds the beech-trees,  
Even as she dreams her arms enfold me,  
Half awaking with a hundred kisses  
On the scarlet lily of her mouth.

XLVI

I SEEK and desire,  
Even as the wind  
That travels the plain  
And stirs in the bloom  
Of the apple-tree.

I wander through life,  
With the searching mind  
That is never at rest,  
Till I reach the shade  
Of my lover's door.

XLVII

L IKE torn sea-kelp in the drift  
Of the great tides of the sea,  
Carried past the harbour-mouth  
To the deep beyond return,

I am buoyed and borne away  
On the loveliness of earth,  
Little caring, save for thee,  
Past the portals of the night.

## XLVIII

FINE woven purple linen  
I bring thee from Phocæa,  
That, beauty upon beauty,  
A precious gift may cover  
The lap where I have lain.

And a gold comb, and girdle,  
And trinkets of white silver,  
And gems are in my sea-chest,  
Lest poor and empty-handed  
Thy lover should return.

And I have brought from Tyre  
A Pan-flute stained vermillion,  
Wherein the gods have hidden  
Love and desire and longing,  
Which I shall loose for thee.

XLIX

WHEN I am home from travel,  
My eager foot will stay not  
Until I reach the threshold  
Where I went forth from thee.

And there, as darkness gathers  
In the rose-scented garden,  
The god who prospers music  
Shall give me skill to play.

And thou shalt hear, all startled,  
A flute blown in the twilight,  
With the soft pleading magic  
The green wood heard of old.

Then, lamp in hand, thy beauty  
In the rose-marble entry !  
And unreluctant Hermes  
Shall give me words to say.

L

WHEN I behold the pharos shine  
And lay a path along the sea,  
How gladly I shall feel the spray,  
Standing upon the swinging prow ;  
  
And question of my pilot old,  
How many watery leagues to sail  
Ere we shall round the harbour reef  
And anchor off the wharves of home !

LI

IS the day long,  
O Lesbian maiden,  
And the night endless  
In thy lone chamber  
In Mitylene ?

All the bright day  
Until welcome evening  
When the stars kindle  
Over the harbour,  
What tasks employ thee ?

Passing the fountain  
At golden sundown,  
One of the home-going  
Traffickers, hast thou  
Thought of thy lover ?

Nay, but how far  
Too brief will the night be,  
When I returning  
To the dear portal  
Hear my own heart beat !

LII

**L**O, on the distance a dark blue ravine,  
A fold in the mountainous forests of fir,  
Cleft from the sky-line sheer down to the shore !

Above are the clouds and the white, pealing gulls,  
At its foot is the rough broken foam of the sea,  
With ever anon the long deep muffled roar,—  
A sigh from the fitful great heart of the world.

Then inland just where the small meadow begins,  
Well bulwarked with boulders that jut in the tide,  
Lies safe beyond storm-beat the harbour in sun.

See where the black fishing-boats, each at its buoy,  
Ride up on the swell with their dare-danger prows,  
To sight o'er the sea-rim what venture may come !

And look, where the narrow white streets of the town  
Leap up from the blue water's edge to the wood,  
Scant room for man's range between mountain and sea,  
And the market where woodsmen from over the hill  
May traffic, and sailors from far foreign ports  
With treasure brought in from the ends of the earth.

And see the third house on the left, with that  
gleam  
Of red burnished copper—the hinge of the door  
Whereat I shall enter, expected so oft  
(Let love be your sea-star!), to voyage no more.

LIII

**A**RT thou the top-most apple  
The gatherers could not reach,  
Reddening on the bough?  
Shall not I take thee?

Art thou a hyacinth blossom  
The shepherds upon the hills  
Have trodden into the ground?  
Shall not I lift thee?

Free is the young god Eros,  
Paying no tribute to power,  
Seeing no evil in beauty,  
Full of compassion.

Once having found the beloved,  
However sorry or woeful,  
However scornful of loving,  
Little it matters.

LIV

**H**OW soon will all my lovely days be over,  
And I no more be found beneath the sun,—  
Neither beside the many-murmuring sea,  
Nor where the plain-winds whisper to the reeds,  
Nor in the tall beech-woods among the hills  
Where roam the bright-lipped Oreads, nor along  
The pasture-sides where berry-pickers stray  
And harmless shepherds pipe their sheep to fold !

For I am eager, and the flame of life  
Burns quickly in the fragile lamp of clay.  
Passion and love and longing and hot tears  
Consume this mortal Sappho, and too soon  
A great wind from the dark will blow upon me,  
And I be no more found in the fair world,  
For all the search of the revolving moon  
And patient shine of everlasting stars.

**S**OUL of sorrow, why this weeping?  
What immortal grief hath touched thee  
With the poignancy of sadness,—  
Testament of tears?

Have the high gods deigned to show thee  
Destiny, and disillusion  
Fills thy heart at all things human,  
Fleeting and desired?

Nay, the gods themselves are fettered  
By one law which links together  
Truth and nobleness and beauty,  
Man and stars and sea.

And they only shall find freedom  
Who with courage rise and follow  
Where love leads beyond all peril,  
Wise beyond all words.

**I**T never can be mine  
To sit in the door in the sun  
And watch the world go by,  
A pageant and a dream ;  
  
For I was born for love,  
And fashioned for desire,  
Beauty, passion, and joy,  
And sorrow and unrest ;  
  
And with all things of earth  
Eternally must go,  
Daring the perilous bourn  
Of joyance and of death,  
  
A strain of song by night,  
A shadow on the hill,  
A hint of odorous grass,  
A murmur of the sea.

LVII

O THERS shall behold the sun  
Through the long uncounted years,—  
Not a maid in after time  
Wise as thou !

For the gods have given thee  
Their best gift, an equal mind  
That can only love, be glad,  
And fear not.

LVIII

**L**ET thy strong spirit never fear,  
Nor in thy virgin soul be thou afraid.  
The gods themselves and the almighty fates  
Cannot avail to harm

With outward and misfortunate chance  
The radiant unshaken mind of him  
Who at his being's centre will abide,  
Secure from doubt and fear.

His wise and patient heart shall share  
The strong sweet loveliness of all things made,  
And the serenity of inward joy  
Beyond the storm of tears.

LIX

WILL none say of Sappho,  
Speaking of her lovers,  
And the love they gave her,—  
Joy and days and beauty,  
Flute-playing and roses,  
Song and wine and laughter,—

Will none, musing, murmur,  
“ Yet, for all the roses,  
All the flutes and lovers,  
Doubt not she was lonely  
As the sea, whose cadence  
Haunts the world for ever.”

LX

WHEN I have departed,  
Say but this behind me,  
“Love was all her wisdom,  
All her care.

“Well she kept love’s secret,—  
Dared and never faltered,—  
Laughed and never doubted  
Love would win.

“Let the world’s rough triumph  
Trample by above her,  
She is safe forever  
From all harm.

“In a land that knows not  
Bitterness nor sorrow,  
She has found out all  
Of truth at last.”

LXI

**T**HREE is no more to say now thou art still,  
There is no more to do now thou art dead,  
There is no more to know now thy clear mind  
Is back returned unto the gods who gave it.

Now thou art gone the use of life is past,  
The meaning and the glory and the pride,  
There is no joyous friend to share the day,  
And on the threshold no awaited shadow.

LXII

PLAY up, play up thy silver flute;  
The crickets all are brave;  
Glad is the red autumnal earth  
And the blue sea.

Play up thy flawless silver flute;  
Dead ripe are fruit and grain.  
When love puts on his scarlet coat,  
Put off thy care.

LXIII

A BEAUTIFUL child is mine,  
Formed like a golden flower,  
Cleis the loved one.  
And above her I value  
Not all the Lydian land,  
Nor lovely Hellas.

LXIV

A H, but now henceforth  
Only one meaning  
Has life for me.

Only one purport,  
Measure and beauty,  
Has the bright world.

What mean the wood-winds,  
Colour and morning,  
Bird, stream, and hill ?

And the brave city  
With its enchantment ?  
Thee, only thee !

LXV

SOFITLY the wind moves through the radiant  
morning,

And the warm sunlight sinks into the valley,  
Filling the green earth with a quiet joyance,  
Strength, and fulfilment.

Even so, gentle, strong and wise and happy,  
Through the soul and substance of my being,  
Comes the breath of thy great love to me-ward,  
O thou dear mortal.

LXVI

WHAT the west wind whispers  
At the end of summer,  
When the barley harvest  
Ripens to the sickle,  
Who can tell ?

What means the fine music  
Of the dry cicada,  
Through the long noon hours  
Of the autumn stillness,  
Who can say ?

How the grape ungathered  
With its bloom of blueness  
Greatens on the trellis  
Of the brick-walled garden,  
Who can know?

Yet I, too, am greatened,  
Keep the note of gladness,  
Travel by the wind's road,  
Through this autumn leisure,—  
By thy love.

LXVII

**I**NDOORS the fire is kindled ;  
Beechwood is piled on the hearthstone ;  
Cold are the chattering oak-leaves ;  
And the ponds frost-bitten.

Softer than rainfall at twilight,  
Bringing the fields benediction  
And the hills quiet and greyness,  
Are my long thoughts of thee.

How should thy friend fear the seasons ?  
They only perish of winter  
Whom Love, audacious and tender,  
Never hath visited.

## LXVIII

**Y**OU ask how love can keep the mortal soul  
Strong to the pitch of joy throughout the years.

Ask how your brave cicada on the bough  
Keeps the long sweet insistence of his cry ;

Ask how the Pleiads steer across the night  
In their serene unswerving mighty course ;

Ask how the wood-flowers waken to the sun,  
Unsummoned save by some mysterious word ;

Ask how the wandering swallows find your eaves  
Upon the rain-wind with returning spring ;

Ask who commands the ever-punctual tide  
To keep the pendulous rhythm of the sea ;

And you shall know what leads the heart of man  
To the far haven of his hopes and fears.

## LXIX

**L**IKE a tall forest were their spears,  
Their banners like a silken sea,  
When the great host in splendour passed  
Across the crimson sinking sun.

And then the bray of brazen horns  
Arose above their clanking march,  
As the long waving column filed  
Into the odorous purple dusk.

O lover, in this radiant world  
Whence is the race of mortal men,  
So frail, so mighty, and so fond,  
That fleets into the vast unknown ?

LXX

**M**Y lover smiled, “O friend, ask not  
The journey’s end, nor whence we are.  
That whistling boy who minds his goats  
So idly in the grey ravine,

“The brown-backed rower drenched with spray,  
The lemon-seller in the street,  
And the young girl who keeps her first  
Wild love-tryst at the rising moon,—

“Lo, these are wiser than the wise.  
And not for all our questioning  
Shall we discover more than joy,  
Nor find a better thing than love !

“Let pass the banners and the spears,  
The hate, the battle, and the greed ;  
For greater than all gifts is peace,  
And strength is in the tranquil mind.”

LXXI

**Y**E who have the stable world  
In the keeping of your hands.  
Flocks and men, the lasting hills,  
And the ever-wheeling stars;

Ye who freight with wondrous things  
The wide-wandering heart of man  
And the galleon of the moon,  
On those silent seas of foam;

Oh, if ever ye shall grant  
Time and place and room enough  
To this fond and fragile heart  
Stifled with the throb of love,

On that day one grave-eyed Fate,  
Pausing in her toil, shall say,  
“Lo, one mortal has achieved  
Immortality of love!”

LXXII

**I** HEARD the gods reply :  
“Trust not the future with its perilous chance ;  
The fortunate hour is on the dial now.

“To-day be wise and great,  
And put off hesitation and go forth  
With cheerful courage for the diurnal need.

“Stout be the heart, nor slow  
The foot to follow the impetuous will,  
Nor the hand slack upon the loom of deeds.

“Then may the Fates look up  
And smile a little in their tolerant way,  
Being full of infinite regard for men.”

LXXIII

THE sun on the tide, the peach on the bough,  
The blue smoke over the hill,  
And the shadows trailing the valley-side,  
Make up the autumn day.

Ah, no, not half! Thou art not here  
Under the bronze beech-leaves,  
And thy lover's soul like a lonely child  
Roams through an empty room.

LXXIV

**I**F death be good,  
Why do the gods not die ?

If life be ill,  
Why do the gods still live ?

If love be naught,  
Why do the gods still love ?

If love be all,  
What should men do but love ?

LXXV

**T**ELL me what this life means,  
O my prince and lover,  
With the autumn sunlight  
On thy bronze-gold head?

With thy clear voice sounding  
Through the silver twilight,—  
What is the lost secret  
Of the tacit earth?

**Y**E have heard how Marsyas,  
In the folly of his pride,  
Boasted of a matchless skill,—  
When the great god's back was turned ;

How his fond imagining  
Fell to ashes cold and grey,  
When the flawless player came  
In serenity and light.

So it was with those I loved  
In the years ere I loved thee.  
Many a saying sounds like truth,  
Until Truth itself is heard.

Many a beauty only lives  
Until Beauty passes by,  
And the mortal is forgot  
In the shadow of the god.

LXXVII

HOUR by hour I sit,  
Watching the silent door.  
Shadows go by on the wall,  
And steps in the street.

Expectation and doubt  
Flutter my timorous heart.  
So many hurrying home—  
And thou still away.

LXXVIII

O NCE in the shining street,  
In the heart of a seaboard town,  
As I waited, behold, there came  
The woman I loved.

As when, in the early spring,  
A daffodil blooms in the grass,  
Golden and gracious and glad,  
The solitude smiled.

LXXIX

**H**OW strange is love, O my lover !  
With what enchantment and power  
Does it not come upon mortals,  
Learned or heedless !

How far away and unreal,  
Faint as blue isles in a sunset  
Haze-golden, all else of life seems,  
Since I have known thee !

LXXX

**H**OW to say I love you :  
What, if I but live it,  
Were the use in that, love ?  
Small, indeed.

Only, every moment  
Of this waking lifetime  
Let me be your lover  
And your friend !

Ah, but then, as sure as  
Blossom breaks from bud-sheath,  
When along the hillside  
Spring returns,

Golden speech should flower  
From the soul so cherished,  
And the mouth your kisses  
Filled with fire.

LXXXI

HARK, love, to the tambourines  
Of the minstrels in the street,  
And one voice that throbs and soars  
Clear above the clashing time!

Some Egyptian royal love-lilt,  
Some Sidonian refrain,  
Vows of Paphos or of Tyre,  
Mount against the silver sun.

Pleading, piercing, yet serene,  
Vagrant in a foreign town,  
From what passion was it born,  
In what lost land over sea ?

LXXXII

OVER the roofs the honey-coloured moon,  
With purple shadows on the silver grass,  
  
And the warm south-wind on the curving sea,  
While we two, lovers past all turmoil now,  
  
Watch from the window the white sails come in,  
Bearing what unknown ventures safe to port !  
  
So falls the hour of twilight and of love  
With wizardry to loose the hearts of men,  
  
And there is nothing more in this great world  
Than thou and I, and the blue dome of dusk.

### LXXXIII

**I**N the quiet garden world,  
Gold sunlight and shadow leaves  
Flicker on the wall.

And the wind, a moment since,  
With rose-petals strewed the path  
And the open door.

Now the moon-white butterflies  
Float across the liquid air,  
Glad as in a dream ;

And, across thy lover's heart,  
Visions of one scarlet mouth  
With its maddening smile.

LXXXIV

**S**OFT was the wind in the beech-trees  
Low was the surf on the shore ;  
In the blue dusk one planet  
Like a great sea-pharos shone.

But nothing to me were the sea-sounds,  
The wind and the yellow star,  
When over my breast the banner  
Of your golden hair was spread.

LXXXV

H AVE you heard the news of Sappho's garden,  
And the Golden Rose of Mitylene,  
Which the bending brown-armed rowers lately  
Brought from over sea, from lonely Pontus?

In a meadow by the river Halys,  
Where some wood-god hath the world in keeping,  
On a burning summer noon they found her,  
Lovely as a Dryad, and more tender.

Her these eyes have seen, and not another  
Shall behold, till time takes all things goodly,  
So surpassing fair and fond and wondrous,—  
Such a slave as, worth a great king's ransom,

No man yet of all the sons of mortals  
But would lose his soul for and regret not;  
So hath Beauty compassed all her children  
With the cords of longing and desire.

Only Hermes, master of word music,  
Ever yet in glory of gold language  
Could ensphere the magical remembrance  
Of her melting, half sad, wayward beauty,

Or devise the silver phrase to frame her,  
The inevitable name to call her,  
Half a sigh and half a kiss when whispered  
Like pure air that feeds a forge's hunger.

Not a painter in the Isles of Hellas  
Could portray her, mix the golden tawny  
With bright stain of poppies, or ensanguine  
Like the life her darling mouth's vermillion,

So that, in the ages long hereafter,  
When we shall be dust of perished summers,  
Any man could say who found that likeness,  
Smiling gently on it, “This was Gorgo!”

LXXXVI

**L**OVE is so strong a thing,  
The very gods must yield,  
When it is welded fast  
With the unflinching truth.

Love is so frail a thing,  
A word, a look, will kill.  
Oh lovers, have a care  
How ye do deal with love.

LXXXVII

**H**ADST thou, with all thy loveliness, been true,  
Had I, with all my tenderness, been strong,  
We had not made this ruin out of life,  
This desolation in a world of joy,  
My poor Gorgo.

Yet even the high gods at times do err ;  
Be therefore thou not overcome with woe,  
But dedicate anew to greater love  
An equal heart, and be thy radiant self  
Once more, Gorgo.

**A**S, on a morn, a traveller might emerge  
 From the deep green seclusion of the hills,  
 By a cool road through forest and through fern,  
 Little frequented, winding, followed long  
 With joyous expectation and day-dreams,  
 And on a sudden, turning a great rock  
 Covered with frondage, dark with dripping water,  
 Behold the seaboard full of surf and sound,  
 With all the space and glory of the world  
 Above the burnished silver of the sea,—

Even so it was upon that first spring day  
 When time, that is a devious path for men,  
 Led me all lonely to thy door at last ;  
 And all thy splendid beauty, gracious and glad,  
 (Glad as bright colour, free as wind or air,  
 And lovelier than racing seas of foam)  
 Bore sense and soul and mind at once away  
 To a pure region where the gods might dwell,  
 Making of me, a vagrant child before,  
 A servant of joy at Aphrodite's will.

LXXXIX

W<sup>H</sup>ERE shall I look for thee,  
Where find thee now,  
O my lost Atthis?

Storm bars the harbour,  
And snow keeps the pass  
In the blue mountains.

Bitter the wind whistles,  
Pale is the sun,  
And the days shorten.

Close to the hearthstone,  
With long thoughts of thee,  
Thy lonely lover

Sits now, remembering  
All the spent hours  
And thy fair beauty.

Ah, when the hyacinth  
Wakens with spring,  
And buds the laurel,

Doubt not, some morning  
When all earth revives,  
Hearing Pan's flute-call

Over the river-beds,  
Over the hills,  
Sounding the summons,

I shall look up and behold  
In the door,  
Smiling, expectant,

Loving as ever  
And glad as of old,  
My own lost Atthis !

A SAD, sad face, and saddest eyes that ever  
Beheld the sun,  
Whence came the grief that makes of all thy beauty  
One sad sweet smile ?

In this bright portrait, where the painter fixed them,  
I still behold  
The eyes that gladdened, and the lips that loved me,  
And, gold on rose,

The cloud of hair that settles on one shoulder  
Slipped from its vest.

I almost hear thy Mitylenean love-song  
In the spring night,

When the still air was odorous with blossoms,  
And in the hour  
Thy first wild girl's-love trembled into being,  
Glad, glad and fond.

Ah, where is all that wonder? What god's malice  
Undid that joy  
And set the seal of patient woe upon thee,  
O my lost love?

XCI

WHY have the gods in derision  
Severed us, heart of my being ?  
Where have they lured thee to wander,  
O my lost lover ?

While now I sojourn with sorrow,  
Having remorse for my comrade,  
What town is blessed with thy beauty,  
Gladdened and prospered ?

Nay, who could love as I loved thee,  
With whom thy beauty was mingled  
In those spring days when the swallows  
Came with the south wind ?

Then I became as that shepherd  
Loved by Selene on Latmus,  
Once when her own summer magic  
Took hold upon her

With a sweet madness, and thenceforth  
Her mortal lover must wander  
Over the wide world for ever,  
Like one enchanted.

XCII

L IKE a red lily in the meadow grasses,  
Swayed by the wind and burning in the  
sunlight,  
I saw you, where the city chokes with traffic,  
Bearing among the passers-by your beauty,  
Unsullied, wild, and delicate as a flower.  
And then I knew, past doubt or peradventure,  
Our loved and mighty Eleusinian mother  
Had taken thought of me for her pure worship,  
And of her favour had assigned my comrade  
For the Great Mysteries,—knew I should find you  
When the dusk murmured with its new-made lovers,  
And we be no more foolish but wise children,  
And well content partake of joy together,  
As she ordains and human hearts desire.

XCIII

WHEN in the spring the swallows all return,  
And the bleak bitter sea grows mild once more,  
With all its thunders softened to a sigh ;

When to the meadows the young green comes back,  
And swelling buds put forth on every bough,  
With wild-wood odours on the delicate air ;

Ah, then, in that so lovely earth wilt thou  
With all thy beauty love me all one way,  
And make me all thy lover as before ?

Lo, where the white-maned horses of the surge,  
Plunging in thunderous onset to the shore,  
Trample and break and charge along the sand !

XCIV

COLD is the wind where Daphne sleeps,  
That was so tender and so warm  
With loving,—with a loveliness  
Than her own laurel lovelier.

Now pipes the bitter wind for her,  
And the snow sifts about her door,  
While far below her frosty hill  
The racing billows plunge and boom

HARK, where Poseidon's  
White racing horses  
Trample with tumult  
The shelving seaboard !

Older than Saturn,  
Older than Rhea,  
That mournful music,  
Falling and surging  
  
With the vast rhythm  
Ceaseless, eternal,  
Keeps the long tally  
Of all things mortal.

How many lovers  
Hath not its lulling  
Cradled to slumber  
With the ripe flowers,

Ere for our pleasure  
This golden summer  
Walked through the corn-lands  
In gracious splendour !

How many loved ones  
Will it not croon to,  
In the long spring-days  
Through coming ages,

When all our day-dreams  
Have been forgotten,  
And none remembers  
Even thy beauty !

They too shall slumber  
In quiet places,  
And mighty sea-sounds  
Call them unheeded.

XCVI

HARK, my lover, it is spring !  
On the wind a faint far call  
Wakes a pang within my heart,  
Unmistakable and keen.

At the harbour mouth a sail  
Glimmers in the morning sun,  
And the ripples at her prow  
Whiten into crumbling foam,

As she forges outward bound  
For the teeming foreign ports.  
Through the open window now,  
Hear the sailors lift a song !

In the meadow ground the frogs  
With their deafening flutes begin,—  
The old madness of the world  
In their golden throats again.

Little fifers of live bronze,  
Who hath taught you with wise lore  
To unloose the strains of joy,  
When Orion seeks the west ?

And you feathered flute-players,  
Who instructed you to fill  
All the blossomy orchards now  
With melodious desire ?

I doubt not our father Pan  
Hath a care of all these things.  
In some valley of the hills  
Far away and misty-blue,

By quick water he hath cut  
A new pipe, and set the wood  
To his smiling lips, and blown,  
That earth's rapture be restored.

And those wild Pandean stops  
Mark the cadence life must keep.  
O my lover, be thou glad ;  
It is spring in Hellas now.

XCVII

**W**HEN the early soft spring wind comes  
blowing

Over Rhodes and Samos and Miletus,  
From the seven mouths of Nile to Lesbos,  
Freighted with sea-odours and gold sunshine,

What news spreads among the island people  
In the market-place of Mitylene,  
Lending that unwonted stir of gladness  
To the busy streets and thronging doorways?

Is it word from Ninus or Arbela,  
Babylon the great, or Northern Imbros?  
Have the laden galleons been sighted  
Stoutly labouring up the sea from Tyre?

Nay, 't is older news that foreign sailor  
With the cheek of sea-tan stops to prattle  
To the young fig-seller with her basket  
And the breasts that bud beneath her tunic,

And I hear it in the rustling tree-tops.  
All this passionate bright tender body  
Quivers like a leaf the wind has shaken,  
Now love wanders through the aisles of springtime.

XCVIII

I AM more tremulous than shaken reeds,  
And love has made me like the river water.  
  
Thy voice is as the hill-wind over me,  
And all my changing heart gives heed, my lover.  
  
Before thy least lost murmur I must sigh,  
Or gladden with thee as the sun-path glitters.

XCIX

OVER the wheat-field,  
Over the hill-crest,  
Swoops and is gone  
The beat of a wild wing,  
Brushing the pine-tops,  
Bending the poppies,  
Hurrying Northward  
With golden summer.

What premonition,  
O purple swallow,  
Told thee the happy  
Hour of migration ?  
Hark ! On the threshold  
(Hush, flurried heart in me !),  
Was there a footfall ?  
Did no one enter ?

Soon will a shepherd  
In rugged Dacia,  
Folding his gentle  
Ewes in the twilight,  
Lifting a level  
Gaze from the sheepfold,  
Say to his fellows,  
“Lo, it is springtime.”

This very hour  
In Mitylene,  
Will not a young girl  
Say to her lover,  
Lifting her moon-white  
Arms to enlace him,  
Ere the glad sigh comes,  
“Lo, it is lovetime!”

## C

O NCE more the rain on the mountain,  
Once more the wind in the valley,  
With the soft odours of springtime  
And the long breath of remembrance,  
O Lityerses !

Warm is the sun in the city.  
On the street corners with laughter  
Traffic the flower-girls. Beauty  
Blossoms once more for thy pleasure  
In many places.

Gentlier now falls the twilight,  
With the slim moon in the pear-trees ;  
And the green frogs in the meadows  
Blow on shrill pipes to awaken  
Thee, Lityerses.

Gladlier now crimson morning  
Flushes fair-built Mitylene,—  
Portico, temple, and column,—  
Where the young garlanded women  
Praise thee with singing.

Ah, but what burden of sorrow  
Tinges their slow stately chorus,  
Though spring revisits the glad earth ?  
Wilt thou not wake to their summons,  
    O Lityerses ?

Shall they then never behold thee,—  
Nevermore see thee returning  
Down the blue cleft of the mountains,  
Nor in the purple of evening  
    Welcome thy coming ?

Nevermore answer thy glowing  
Youth with their ardour, nor cherish  
With lovely longing thy spirit,  
Nor with soft laughter beguile thee,  
    O Lityerses ?

Heedless, assuaged, art thou sleeping  
Where the spring sun cannot find thee,  
Nor the wind waken, nor woodlands  
Bloom for thy innocent rapture  
    Through golden hours ?

Hast thou no passion nor pity  
For thy deserted companions?  
Never again will thy beauty  
Quell their desire nor rekindle,  
O Lityerses!

Nay, but in vain their clear voices  
Call thee. Thy sensitive beauty  
Is become part of the fleeting  
Loveliness, merged in the pathos  
Of all things mortal.

In the faint fragrance of flowers,  
On the sweet draft of the sea-wind,  
Linger strange hints now that loosen  
Tears for thy gay gentle spirit,  
O Lityerses!



## EPILOGUE

NOW the hundred songs are made,  
And the pause comes. Loving Heart,  
There must be an end to summer,  
And the flute be laid aside.

On a day the frost will come,  
Walking through the autumn world,  
Hushing all the brave endeavour  
Of the crickets in the grass.

On a day (Oh, far from now !)  
Earth will hear this voice no more ;  
For it shall be with thy lover  
As with Linus long ago.

All the happy songs he wrought  
From remembrance soon must fade,  
As the wash of silver moonlight  
From a purple-dark ravine.

Frail as dew upon the grass  
Or the spindrift of the sea,  
Out of nothing they were fashioned  
And to nothing must return.

Nay, but something of thy love,  
Passion, tenderness, and joy,  
Some strange magic of thy beauty,  
Some sweet pathos of thy tears,

Must imperishably cling  
To the cadence of the words,  
Like a spell of lost enchantments  
Laid upon the hearts of men.

Wild and fleeting as the notes  
Blown upon a woodland pipe,  
They must haunt the earth with gladness  
And a tinge of old regret.

For the transport in their rhythm  
Was the throb of thy desire,  
And thy lyric moods shall quicken  
Souls of lovers yet unborn.

When the golden days arrive,  
With the swallow at the eaves,  
And the first sob of the south-wind  
Sighing at the latch with spring,

Long hereafter shall thy name  
Be recalled through foreign lands,  
And thou be a part of sorrow  
When the Linus songs are sung.

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